

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCCT-01 OPR-02 A-01 SY-05 IO-10 SSO-00

NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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O P 291230Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1918

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA PRIORITY

AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 10187

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PDIP PINS PFOR GR US

SUBJECT: WEEKEND PRESS COVERAGE MURDER OF SA RICHARD WELCH

REF: A. ATHENS 10112; B. ATHENS 10175

1. GREEK WEEKEND PRESS (DEC 27-28) CONTINUED TO GIVE MAJOR COVERAGE TO ASSASSINATION OF SPECIAL ASSISTANT RICHARD S. WELCH. STORIES FOR MOSTNART WERE SHORT ON FACTS BUT HEAVY ON SPECULATION AS TO MOTIVATIONS BEHIND THE MURDER. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, PUBLIC PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE ORDERED A PRESS BLACKOUT ON ALL ASPECTS OF WELCH MURDER INVESTIGATION. ALSO, MINISTRY OF PUBLIC ORDER ISSUED STATEMENT DECEMBER 28 REGRETTING ANY INCONVENIENCE CAUSED BY ONGOING INTERROGATIONS AND SEARCHES OF HOMES.

2. PUBLIC PROSECUTOR'S DECISION TO ORDER NEWS BLACKOUT PROMPTED CRITICAL COMMENTS AND EDITORIALS IN NUMBER OF SUNDAY'S NEWSPAPERS. ADDITIONALLY, STATEMENT OF PUBLIC ORDER MINISTRY, PROBABLY NECESSITATED IN PART BY PASOK CONFIDENTIAL

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LEADER PAPANDREOU'S COMMENTS ON SATURDAY CRITICIZING FACT

THAT HOMES OF "FORMER RESISTANCE HEROES" WERE SEARCHED BY POLICE AUTHORITIES IN CONDUCT OF THEIR INVESTIGATIONS.

3. SATURDAY'S PRESS CARRIED VIRTUAL FLOOD OF SPECULATIVE PIECES ON WELCH MURDER. THEORIES OFFERED FOR MURDER RANGED FROM (A) ATTEMPT TO CAUSE DETERIORATION IN GREEK-US RELATIONS TO (B) AN ACT CARRIED OUT WITHIN CIA ORGANIZATION CONSTITUTING A "CLEARING OF ACCOUNTS." THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE COMMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT WELCH'S MURDER MIGHT BE UTILIZED AS DEVICE TO PRESSURE CONGRESS TO CEASE FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS INTO AND REVELATIONS ABOUT CIA ACTIVITIES. ANOTHER FACTOR FEEDING FIRE OF SPECULATION WAS UNSUBSTANTIATED REPORT PICKED UP BY A FEW PAPERS, THAT A PURPORTED FORMER CIA STATION CHIEF, JAMES POTTS, HAD BEEN SEEN IN ATHENS THREE DAYS BEFORE THE WELCH MURDER. (IN REPLY TO PRESS QUERIES WE HAVE DENIED THIS.)

4. DISPLAY OF BAD TASTE CONTINUED IN MANY ATHENS PAPERS WITH REPEATED REPLAY OF ORIGINAL ATHENS NEWS STORY NAMING WELCH AND OTHER AMERICANS AS PURPORTED CIA AGENTS. SUNDAY ELEFTHEROTYPIA (LEFT OF CENTER, ANTI-US) ON DEC 28 PRINTED SCURRILOUS FRONT-PAGE CARTOON DEPICTING CIA'S SATISFACTION AT WELCH MURDER. AT LEAST ONE AFTERNOON NEWSPAPER OVER THE WEEKEND ALSO PRINTED A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE EXTERIOR OF A HOME WHERE ANOTHER ALLEGED CIA OFFICER LIVES. IN MONUMENTAL GAFFE VRADYNI (CONSERVATIVE, PRO-GOVERNMENT) ON SATURDAY AFTER-NOON DEVOTED ENTIRE FRONT PAGE TO PURPORTED PHOTOGRAPH OF RICHARD WELCH--A PICTURE WHICH IN FACT WAS OF THE AUSTRALIAN COMMERCIAL COUNSELOR.

5. FLAVOR OF SOME OF THE PRESS COVERAGE MAY BE GARNERED FROM A FEW SELECTED HEADLINES: ELEFTHEROTYPIA, "CIA IN PANIC." ATHINAIKI (LEFT OF CENTER, PRO-PASOK) "QUELCH KNEW TOO MUCH;" APOGEVMATINI (CONSERVATIVE, PRO-GOVERNMENT) "CLEARING OF ACCOUNTS;" TA NEA (LIBERAL, OPPOSITION) "DARK MOTIVES FOR MURDER;" AND ELEFTHEROTYPIA "CIA SACRIFICED WELCH."

6. COMMENT: DCM VIGOROUSLY PROTESTED TENOR OF PRSSS
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COVERAGE TO UNDER MINISTER FOR PRESS LAMBRIAS, DRAWING HIS ATTENTION IN PARTICULAR TO USE OF GREEK WORDS "EXECUTION" IN NEWSPAPER HEADLINES REFERRING TO DICK WELCH'S MURDER AND TO REPETITION OF ORIGINAL ATHENS NEWS STORY GIVING NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF EMBASSY OFFICERS ALLIED TO BE CIA PERSONNEL. LAMBRIAS SAID THAT HE HAD ALREADY SPOKEN TO SEVERAL PUBLISHERS AND EDITORS, INCLUDING VIMA-NEA OWNER CHRISTOS LAMBRAKIS, ABOUT NEED TO AVOID SENSATIONAL AND SPECULATIVE

REPORTING. HE EXPRESSED HIS REGRET AT TONE OF REPORTING
AND PROMISED TO CONTINUE HIS EFFORTS. HE POINTED OUT
HOWEVER THAT SOME OF THE NASTIEST SPECULATION WAS BASED
ON STORIES PUBLISHED IN AMERICAN PRESS STEMMING FROM
CONGRESSIONAL "REVELATIONS" ABOUT CIA. IN THIS CON-
NECTION, SENATOR EAGLETON'S STATEMENT ON ARRIVAL IN
ATHENS DEC 26 THAT IT WAS "RUBBISH" TO THINK US GOVT.
ITSELF WAS INVOLVED IN WELCH'S DEATH WAS WIDELY REPORTED
AND MAY HAVE HELPED CLEAR AIR.

KUBISCH

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, ASSASSINATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 DEC 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975ATHENS10187
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: DG ALTERED
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750448-0865
From: ATHENS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t1975129/aaaaahky.tel
Line Count: 125
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 ATHENS 10112, 76 ATHENS 10175
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <08 MAY 2003 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <30 SEP 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: WEEKEND PRESS COVERAGE MURDER OF SA RICHARD WELCH
TAGS: PDIP, PINS, PFOR, GR, US, CIA, (WELCH, RICHARD)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006